

# THE LITERARY EXAMINER.

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## REVIEW OF BOOKS.

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### *The Liberal, No. IV.*

THE fourth number of *The Liberal* is about to appear, and being very pleasantly miscellaneous, we cannot possibly do any thing which falls in more with the plan and spirit of this publication, than to accompany a slight account of it with a few brief specimens of its contents.

The present number opens with a translation of the first canto of the “Morgante Maggiore” of Pulci, by Lord Byron. In a brief advertisement his Lordship observes, that this work divides with the “Orlando Innamorato,” the honour of having formed the style and story of Ariosto; that great poet having attempered the too great gravity and chivalric stateliness of Boiardo, by an attractive admixture of the lightness and gaiety of Pulci. The latter has also the honour of having suggested the recent eccentric English poem of Whistlecraft, which in regard both to incident and expression has evidently been modelled on the “Morgante Maggiore.” Adverting to the extraordinary blending of licence with devotion which has uniformly prevailed in Italy, Lord Byron remarks that it has always been a question whether Pulci intended his work for a satire upon religion or not; and is of opinion that its reception among the classics of Italy proves to the contrary. “That he intended to ridicule the monastic life, and suffered his imagination to play with the simple dulness of his converted giant, seems evident enough,” continues his Lordship, “but surely it were as unjust to accuse him of irreligion on this account, as to denounce Fielding for his Parson Adams, Barnabas, Thwackum, Supple, and the Ordinary in Jonathan Wild; or Scott, for the exquisite use of his Covenanters in the Tales of my Landlord.”

In the execution of this, the first translation of this singular production, Lord Byron has retained the stanza and versification of the original, the text of which is given along with it. This he hints was no very easy task, but let him once more speak for himself:—

The reader, on comparing it with the annexed original, is requested to remember that the antiquated language of Pulci, however pure, is not easy to the generality of Italians themselves, from its great mixture of Tuscan proverbs; and he may therefore be more indulgent to the present attempt. How far the translator has succeeded, and whether or no he shall continue the work, are questions which the public will decide. He was induced to make the experiment partly by his love for, and partial intercourse with, the Italian language, of which it is so easy to acquire a slight knowledge, and with which it is so nearly impossible for a foreigner to become accurately conversant. The Italian language is like a capricious beauty, who accords her smiles to all, her favours to few, and sometimes least to those who

have courted her longest. The translator wished also to present in an English dress a part at least of a poem never yet rendered into a northern language; at the same time that it has been the original of some of the most celebrated productions on this side of the Alps, as well as of those recent experiments in poetry in England, which have been already mentioned.

Pulci commences his poem in the following very characteristic manner:—

In the beginning was the Word next God;  
 God was the Word, the Word no less was he:  
 This was in the beginning, to my mode  
 Of thinking, and without him nought could be:  
 Therefore, just Lord! from out thy high abode,  
 Benign and pious, bid an Angel flee,  
 One only, to be my companion, who  
 Shall help my famous, worthy, old song through.  
 And thou, oh Virgin! daughter, mother, bride,  
 Of the same Lord, who gave to you each key  
 Of heaven, and hell, and every thing beside,  
 The day thy Gabriel said, "All hail!" to thee,  
 Since to thy servants pity's ne'er denied,  
 With flowing rhymes, a pleasant style and free,  
 Be to my verses then benignly kind,  
 And to the end illuminate my mind.

After some further prefatory matter, we are suddenly introduced to the court of Charlemagne on Christmas-day, at which period of festivity, the treacherous Ganellone contrives to work the disgrace of the Paladin Orlando, who retires from court in disgust, and wanders like a true Knight-errant, until he lights on an abbey situated midst "glens obscure," in a distant land which "formed the Christian and the Pagans' bound." This holy receptacle, the pious abbot informs him, is much annoyed by three paynim brothers of giant brood, Passamont, Alabaster, and Morgante, who had taken up their abode in the neighbourhood, and who annoy the godly fraternity with the most unheard-of pranks. We supply a specimen of the humour: it is the worthy father abbot who speaks:—

"Our ancient fathers living the desert in,  
 "For just and holy works were duly fed;  
 "Think not they lived on locusts sole, 'tis certain  
 "That manna was rain'd down from heaven instead;  
 "But here 'tis fit we keep on the alert in  
 "Our bounds, or taste the stones shower'd down for bread,  
 "From off yon mountain, daily raining faster,  
 "And flung by Passamont and Alabaster.  
 "The third, Morgante, 's savagest by far; he  
 "Plucks up pines, beeches, poplar-trees, and oaks,  
 "And flings them, our community to bury,  
 "And all that I can do but more provokes."  
 While thus they parley in the cemetery,  
 A stone from one of their gigantic strokes,  
 Which nearly crushed Rondell,\* came tumbling over,  
 So that he took a long leap under cover.  
 "For God's sake, cavalier, come in with speed,  
 "The manna's falling now," the abbot cried:  
 "This fellow does not wish my horse should feed,  
 "Dear abbot," Roland unto him replied;  
 "Of restiveness he'd cure him had he need;  
 "That stone seems with good will and aim applied."  
 The holy father said, "I don't deceive;  
 "They'll one day fling the mountain, I believe."

\* Orlando's horse.



The heroic Orlando immediately volunteers his services against the lubberly brethren, two of whom he slays very speedily, but strange to say, the third, Morgante, prevents a battle by declaring himself with more simplicity than eloquence, a convert to Christianity; and after having been favoured by the Paladin upon the proper bounds of Christian sympathy, the docile giant assures Orlando that the fact of his two slain brothers being in hell, which as in duty bound he now piously believes, does not abate his satisfaction in the least. Nay, in the genuine renegado spirit, our convert acts as like Mr. Southey as possible, for he gratuitously offers to cut off the hands of his dead brothers and associates, and to bear them as trophies to the monks, in proof of his pious sincerity:—

“ A word unto the wise,” Morgante said,  
 “ Is wont to be enough, and you shall see  
 “ How much I grieve about my brethren dead;  
 “ And if the will of God seem good to me,  
 “ Just, as you tell me, 'tis in heav'n obey'd—  
 “ Ashes to ashes,—merry let us be!  
 “ I will cut off the hands from both their trunks,  
 “ And carry them unto the holy monks.”

This religious duty is performed, without a pun,—*off hand*; and after such an undeniable evidence of a Christian spirit, the giant is received very graciously by the holy brotherhood, and immediately (the Laureate again) employed in the dirty work of the convent. Morgante, in truth (and here the comparison fails) is a very stupid soul of the Jack-the-Giant-Killer's breed, with scarcely wit to keep out of a well, or to save his nose from a post; but good-humoured in his way, and as frolicsome as a rhinoceros. We quote the following passage for the amusement and information of *The Fancy* who will doubtless be pleased at the explanation in the note. Morgante, be it understood, volunteers an expedition, with an enormous tub on his shoulder, to fetch water for the abbey from a neighbouring fountain; and in his progress encounters a monstrous herd of swine:—

Morgante at a venture shot an arrow,  
 Which pierced a pig precisely in the ear,  
 And passed unto the other side quite thorough,  
 So that the boar, defunct, lay tripped up near.  
 Another, to revenge his fellow farrow,  
 Against the giant rush'd in fierce career,  
 And reach'd the passage with so swift a foot,  
 Morgante was not now in time to shoot.  
 Perceiving that the pig was on him close,  
 He gave him such a punch upon the head \*  
 As floor'd him, so that he no more arose—  
 Smashing the very bone; and he fell dead  
 Next to the other. Having seen such blows,  
 The other pigs along the valley fled:  
 Morgante on his neck the bucket took,  
 Full from the spring, which neither swerved nor shook.

This swinish victory made the convent for some time resemble the vast empire of China, after the discovery of “ roast pig,” as related by

\* “ ‘ Gli dette in sulla testa un gran punzone.’ It is strange that Pulci should have literally anticipated the technical terms of my old friend and master Jackson, and the art which he has carried to its highest pitch. ‘ A punch on the head,’ or ‘ a punch *in* the head,’—‘ un punzone in sulla testa,’—is the exact and frequent phrase of our best pugilists, who little dream that they are talking the purest Tuscan.”

the ingenious Elia. Sufficient, however, in the way of sample; we shall therefore conclude with observing, that the present canto terminates with preparations on the part of Orlando and the giant, to quit the monastery together in pursuit of the Knight-errant vocation; and whether the English reader will know any more of them, we have already shown that it will be for the public to decide. We have little doubt of the nature of the decision.

The succeeding article to Morgante Maggiore is No. IV of "Letters from Abroad." It relates principally to Genoa, in respect to which, it conveys a variety of information that can be acquired by organs of a refined and peculiar construction alone. Descriptive epistles of this class, close up the rear of matter-of-fact travellers with the happiest effect—a liqueur after dinner. Our meaning however will be best illustrated by extract, and the following will go near to convey it:—

All the insect tribes, good and bad, acquire vigour and size as they get southwards. I have seen however but one scorpion yet, and the rascal was young: we were looking upon him with much interest, and speculating upon his turn of mind, when a female servant quietly took out her scissors and cut him in two. Her bile, with eating oil and minestra, was as much exalted as his. Is it true that all poison is nothing but an essential acid, exalted in proportion to its venom? The discovery of the Prussic Acid, which kills instantly, looks like it.—Our antipathies are set up every now and then, by the sight of some new and hideous-looking insect; but we have not seen a twentieth part of what we expected. The flies bite so, that the *zanzaliere* (the bed-net against the gnats) seems quite as necessary against them as the enemy from whom it is named. The gnats have hardly come, yet we have been obliged to take to it. We have not yet seen the *mantis*, which I am told will turn its head round at music, and seem to listen. Of the silk-worms, notice has just been given us in the neighbourhood by a general stripping of the leaves off the mulberry trees. The beauty of the bees and butterflies you may imagine. But there is one insect, of so fairy-like a nature and lustre, that it would be almost worth coming in the south to look at, if there were no other attraction. I have already alluded to it,—the *fire-fly*. Imagine thousands of flashing diamonds every night powdering the ground, the trees, and the air; especially in the darkest places, and the corn-fields. They give at once a delicacy and brilliance to Italian darkness, inconceivable. It is the glow-worm, winged, and flying in crowds. In England, you know, the female alone gives light: at least, that of the male, who is the exclusive possessor of the wings, is hardly perceptible. Worm is a wrong word, the creature being a real insect. The Italian name is *Lucciola*, Little-light,—in Genoa, *Cæe-belle* (*Chiare belle*)—Clear and fine. Its aspect, when held in the hand, is that of a dark-coloured beetle, but without the hardness or sluggish look. The light is contained in the under part of the extremity of the abdomen, exhibiting a dull golden-coloured partition by day, and flashing occasionally by day-light, especially when the hand is shaken. At night, the flashing is that of the purest and most lucid fire, spangling the vineyards and olive-trees, and their dark avenues, with innumerable stars. Its use is not known: in England, and I believe here, the supposition is, that it is a signal of love. It affords no perceptible heat, but is supposed to be phosphoric. In a dark room, a single one is sufficient to flash a light against the wall. I have read of a lady in the West Indies, who could see to read by the help of three under a glass as long as they chose to accommodate her. A few of them are generally in our rooms all night, going about like little sparkling elves. It is impossible not to think of something spiritual, in seeing the progress of one of them through a dark room. You only know it by the flashing of its lamp, which takes place every three or four inches apart, sometimes oftener, thus marking its track in and out the apartment, or about it. It is like a little fairy taking its rounds. These insects remind us of the lines in Herrick, inviting his mistress to come to him at night-time; and they suit them still better than his English ones:—

Their lights the glow-worms lend thee;  
The shooting stars attend thee;  
And the elves also,  
Whose little eyes glow  
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee;

To me, who pass more of my time even than usual, in the ideal world, these spiritual-looking little creatures are more than commonly interesting.



The next article in sequence is a poem entitled *The Choice*, which will be immediately and appropriately assigned to the author of "Letters from Abroad." The thought originated in a perusal of the same, but once popular production under the same title, by Pomfret, to whom it proved of very fatal consequence. Owing to a not very well weighed expression, that he would have a housekeeper, but not a wife, he was misrepresented to the Bishop of London, by some of the slanderous religious Botherbys of the day, and coming up to London to clear himself, he caught the small pox, and died at the age of thirty-six:—another example of the endless bitter consequences of rancour and bigotry. This, by the way, and because it avowedly led to the article under consideration, otherwise, we believe there never was a man of a respectable portion of imaginative power yet, who did not speculate in the formation of a beau ideal—"some bright isle of rest," as T. Moore observes, which is to include all the humanities and felicities of life, with the least possible alloy of worldly anxiety. "Wishing," says Dr. Young, "is the constant hectic of a fool." We do not agree with him, unless it seduces from virtuous and necessary action, for in most other respects it affords a secret solace to the mind, and produces much of the complacency of reality. Often, indeed, more than reality will produce, for without altogether embracing the stately but uncomfortable moral of Dr. Johnson in his *Rasselas*, we apprehend there is no human elysium that is not haunted with the ghost of some "cruel something unpossess'd." But let us not be Johnsonian, for certainly our author is not; but dropping all "cogiabundity," hasten to supply a specimen of the poetry, in a description of the imaginary residence of the poet:—

First, on a green I'd have a low, broad house,  
Just seen by travellers through the garden boughs;  
And that my luck might not seem ill-bestowed,  
A bench and spring should greet them on the road.  
My grounds should not be large; I like to go  
To Nature for a range, and prospect too,  
And cannot fancy she'll comprise for me,  
Even in a park, her all-sufficiency.  
Besides, my thoughts fly far; and when at rest,  
Love, not a watch-tower, but a lulling nest.  
But all the ground I had should keep a look  
Of Nature still, have birds'-nests and a brook;  
One spot for flowers, the rest all turf and trees;  
For I'd not grow my own bad lettuces.  
And above all, no house should be so near,  
That strangers should discern me here and there;  
Much less when some fair friend was at my side,  
And swear I thought her charming,—which I did.  
I am not sure I'd have a rookery;  
But sure I am I'd not live near the sea,  
To view its great flat face, and have my sleeps  
Filled full of shrieking dreams and foundering ships;  
Or hear the drunkard, when his slaughter's o'er,  
Like Sinbad's monster scratching on the shore.  
I'd live far inland, in a world of glades,  
Yet not so desert as to fright the maids:  
A batch of cottages should smoke beside;  
And there should be a town within a morning's ride.

My house of brick should not be great or mean,  
Much less built formally, outside or in.  
I hate the trouble of a mighty house,

That worst of mountains labouring with a mouse ;  
 And should dislike as much to fill a niche in  
 A Grecian temple opening to a kitchen.  
 The frogs in Homer should have had such boxes,  
 Or Æsop's frog, whose heart was like the ox's.  
 Such puff about high-roads, so grand, so small,  
 With wings and what not, portico and all,  
 And poor drench'd pillars, which it seems a sin  
 Not to mat up at night-time, or take in.  
 I'd live in none of these. Nor would I have  
 Veranda'd windows to forestall my grave ;  
 Veranda'd truly, from the Northern heat !  
 And cut down to the floor to comfort one's cold feet !  
 I like a thing to please the traveller's eye,  
 But more a house to live in, not to die.  
 Older than new I'd have it ; dressed with blooms  
 Of honied green, and quaint with straggling rooms,  
 A few of which, white-bedded and well swept,  
 Should bear the name of friends for whom they're kept.  
 And yet to shew I had a taste withal,  
 I'd have some casts of statues in the hall,  
 Or rather entrance, whose sweet steady eyes  
 Should touch the comers with a mild surprise,  
 And so conduct them, hushing to my door,  
 Where, if a friend, the house should hear a roar.  
 The grateful beggar should look in at these,  
 And wonder what I did with Popish images.

In general terms, the aspirant sighs for a life of literary leisure in the country, enlivened by a due portion of that sort of "Allegro," which in advertence to the beautiful production of Milton, has been called "the mirth of a melancholy man." We were much pleased with the inclusion of a bowling green in the varieties of exercise selected, the decline of which venerable and gossiping pastime in this age of over-excitement is a great barbarity :—

And this reminds me, that behind some screen  
 About my grounds, I'd have a bowling-green ;  
 Such as in wits' and merry women's days  
 Suckling preferred before his walk of bays.  
 You may still see them, dead as haunts of fairies,  
 By the old seats of Killigrew and Carews,  
 Where all, alas ! is vanished from the ring,  
 Wits and black eyes, the skittles and the king ! \*

It is not for us to dwell upon certain peculiar tastes and predilections of the author, for that would be to extract too much, suffice it to say, that for every *wherefore* there is a *why*. We cannot however forbear giving the following beautifully expressed notion of a chamber of worthies :—

\* "Bowls are now thought vulgar: that is to say, a certain number of fine vulgar people agree to call them so. The fashion was once otherwise. Suckling prefers

A pair of black eyes, or a lucky hit  
 At bowls, above all the trophies of wit.

"Piccadilly, in Clarendon's time, was 'a fair house of entertainment and gaming, with handsome gravel walks for shade, and where were an upper and a lower bowling-green, whither very many of the nobility and gentry of the best quality resorted, both for exercise and conversation.'—*History of the Rebellion, Vol. 2.*—It seems to have been to the members of Parliament what Brooks's is now, and was a much better place for them to refresh their faculties in. The robust intellects of the Commonwealth grew there, and the airy wits that succeeded them. The modern gambling-houses are fit to produce nothing better than their name bespeaks. There grow our sottish financiers and timid intriguers. It is the same with the difference of the hours they keep."



Next there, and looking out on either side,  
 I'd have "a little chapel edified,"  
 Informed with heads of those who, heavenly wise,  
 Through patient thought or many sympathies,  
 Lived betwixt heaven and earth, and bore for us  
 Dire thirsty deaths, or drank the deadly juice.  
 Greek beauty should be there, and Gothic shade;  
 And brave as anger, gentle as a maid,  
 The name on whose dear heart my hope's worn cheek was laid.  
 Here, with a more immediate consciousness,  
 Would we feel all that blesses us, and bless;  
 And lean on one another's heart, and make  
 Sweet resolutions, ever, for love's sake;  
 And recognise the eternal Good and Fair,  
 Atoms of whose vast active spirit we are;  
 And try by what great yearnings we could force  
 The globe on which we live to take a more harmonious course.

The conclusion is also impressively elegant:—

And when I died, 'twould please me to be laid  
 In my own ground's most solitary shade;  
 Not for the gloom, much less to be alone,  
 But solely as a room that still might seem my own.  
 There should my friends come still, as to a place  
 That held me yet, and bring me a kind face:  
 There should they bring me still their griefs and joys,  
 And hear in the swell'd breeze a little answering noise.  
 Had I renown enough, I'd choose to lie,  
 As Hafiz did, bright in the public eye,  
 With marble grace enclosed, and a green shade,  
 And young and old should read me, and be glad.  
 This for mankind, and one who loves them all:  
 But should my own pure pleasure guide the pall,  
 Then to the bed of my affections, where  
 My best friends lay, should its calm steps repair;  
 And two such vistas to my travail's end  
 Before me now with gathering looks attend:  
 One, in a gentle village, my old home;  
 The other, by the softened walls of Rome.

We are next presented with a description of the character and writings of the antique Italian Rambler, Giovanni Villani, author of the *Chroniche Fiorentine*, and a contemporary of Dante, with the persons of whose spirits he makes us familiar—"who," to use the better language of the author of the article, "guides us through the unfinished streets and growing edifices of Firenze la bella, and transports us back to the superstitions, party spirit and companionship, and wars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries." This is an entertaining and characteristic article, but in respect to subject not so readily extractable in a moderate compass. We are unwilling however to omit an introductory passage to the mention of Villani, which is elicited by the fact of the old chronicler partaking in no small degree of the modern prevalent failing of egotism. It is one of the best apologetical pleas we ever heard. After speaking of glaring offences of self intrusion, the writer observes, that when well managed, it often forms one of the main sources of interest, and chief causes of felicitous composition:—

To sit down for the purpose of talking of oneself, will sometimes freeze the warmth of inspiration; but, when elevated and carried away by the subject in hand, some similitude or contrast may awaken a chord which else had slept, and the whole mind will pour itself into the sound; and he must be a critic such as Sterne describes, his stop-watch in his hand, who would arrest the lengthened echo of the deepest music of the soul. Let each man lay his hand on his heart and say, if Milton's reference to his own blindness and personal circumstances does not throw an in-

terest over *Paradise Lost*, which they would not lose to render the work as much no man's or any man's production as the *Æneid*—supposing *Ille ego* to be an interpolation, which I fondly trust it is not.

This habit of self-analysis and display has also caused many men of genius to undertake works where the individual feeling of the author embues the whole subject with a peculiar hue. I have frequently remarked, that these books are often the peculiar favourites among men of imagination and sensibility. Such persons turn to the human heart as the undiscovered country. They visit and revisit their own; endeavour to understand its workings, to fathom its depths, and to leave no lurking thought or disguised feeling in the hiding places where so many thoughts and feelings, for fear of shocking the tender consciences of those inexperienced in the task of self-examination, delight to seclude themselves. As a help to the science of self-knowledge, and also as a continuance of it, they wish to study the minds of others, and particularly of those of the greatest merit. The sight of land was not more welcome to Columbus, than are these traces of individual feeling, chequering their more formal works of art, to the voyagers in the noblest of *terræ incognitæ*, the soul of man. Sometimes, despairing to attain to a knowledge of the secrets of the best and wisest, they are pleased to trace human feeling wherever it is artlessly and truly portrayed. No book perhaps has been oftener the vade-mecum of men of wit and sensibility than Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*; the zest with which it is read being heightened by the proof the author gave in his death of his entire initiation into the arcana of his science. The essential attributes of such a book must be truth; for else the fiction is more tame than any other; and thus Sterne may become this friend to the reading man, but his imitators never can; for affectation is easily detected and deservedly despised. Montaigne is another great favourite; his pages are referred to as his conversation would be, if indeed his conversation was half so instructive, half so amusing, or contained half so vivid a picture of his internal spirit as his essays. Rousseau's *Confessions*, written in a more liberal and even prodigal spirit of intellectual candour, is to be ranked as an inestimable acquisition to this class of production. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* has the merit of carrying light into the recesses not of his own, but another's peculiar mind. Spence's *Anecdotes* is a book of the same nature, but less perfect in its kind. Half the beauty of Lady Mary Montague's *Letters* consists in the *I* that adorns them; and this *I*, this sensitive, imaginative, suffering, enthusiastic pronoun, spreads an inexpressible charm over Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters from Norway*.

An historian is perhaps to be held least excusable, if he intrude personally on his readers. Yet they might well follow the example of Gibbon, who, while he left the pages of his *Decline and Fall* unstained by any thing that is not applicable to the times of which he treated, has yet, through the medium of his *Life and Letters*, given a double interest to his history and opinions. Yet an author of *Memoirs*, or a *History of his own Times*, must necessarily appear sometimes upon the scene. Mr. Hyde gives greater interest to Lord Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, though I have often regretted that a quiet *I* had not been inserted in its room.

A paper headed "Pulpit Oratory" follows, which is chiefly occupied with portraits of Dr. Chalmers and Mr. Irving, but principally the latter. The hand will be immediately recognised, by the following extract:—

"Mr. Irving is a more amiable moralist, and a more practical reasoner [than Dr. Chalmers]. He throws a glancing, pleasing light over the gloomy ground of Calvinism. There is something humane in his appeals, striking in his apostrophes, graceful in his action, soothing in the tones of his voice. He is not affected and theatrical; neither is he deeply impassioned or overpowering from the simple majesty of his subject. He is above common-place both in fancy and argument; yet he can hardly rank as a poet or philosopher. He is a modernised Covenanter, a sceptical fanatic. We do not feel exactly on sure ground with him—we scarcely know whether he preaches Christ crucified, or himself. His pulpit style has a resemblance to the *florid Gothic*. We are a little *mystified* when a man with one hand brings us all the nice distinctions and air-drawn speculations of modern unbelievers, and arms the other with "fire hot from hell,"—when St. Paul and Jeremy Bentham, the Evangelists and the Sorrows of Werter, Seneca, Shakespear, the author of *Caleb Williams* and the *Political Justice*, are mingled together in the same passage, and quoted in the same breath, however eloquent that breath may be. We see Mr. Irving smile with decent scorn at this remark, and launch one more thunderbolt at the critics. He is quite welcome, and we should be proud of his notice. In the discourses he has lately delivered, and which have drawn crowds to admire them, he



has laboured to describe the Sensual Man, the Intellectual Man, the Moral Man, and the Spiritual Man; and has sacrificed the three first at the shrine of the last.—He gave certainly a terrific picture of the death-bed of the Sensual Man—a scene where few shine—but it is a good subject for oratory, and he made the most of it. He described the Poet well, walking by the mountain side, in the eye of nature—yet oppressed, panting rather than satisfied, with beauty and sublimity. Neither Fame nor Genius, it is most true, are all-sufficient to the mind of man! He made a fair hit at the Philosophers; first, at the Political Economist, who draws a circle round man, gives him so many feet of earth to stand upon, and there leaves him to starve in all his nobler parts and faculties: next, at the great Jurisconsult, who carves out a mosaic work of motives for him, cold, hard, and dry, and expects him to move mechanically in right lines, squares, and parallelograms, drills him into perfection, and screws him into utility. He then fell foul of the Moralist and Sentimentalist, weighed him in the balance, and found him wanting—deficient in clearness of sight to discern good, in strength of hand and purpose to seize upon it when discerned. But Religion comes at last to the aid of the Spiritual Man, couches the blind sight, and braces the paralytic limb; the Lord of Hosts is in the field, and the battle is won; his countenance pours light into our souls, and his hand stretched out imparts strength to us, by which we tower to our native skies! In treating of this subject, Mr. Irving introduced several powerful images and reflections, to show how feeble moral and intellectual motives are to contend with the allurements of sense and the example of the world. Reason alone, he said, was no more able to stem the tide of prejudice and fashion, than the swimmer with his single arm (here he used an appropriate and spirited gesture, which reminded us of the description of the heroic action of the swimmer in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*) is able to oppose the raging torrent, as the voice of conscience was only heard in the tumultuous scenes of life, like the faint cry of the sea-bird in the wide world of waters. He drew an animated but mortifying sketch of the progress of the Patriot and Politician, weaned by degrees from his attachment to young Liberty to hug old Corruption; and showed (strikingly enough) that this change from youthful ardour to a hoary heartless old age of selfishness and ridicule (there were several Members of the Honourable House present) was not owing to increased wisdom or strength of sight, but to faltering resolution and weakness of hand, that could no longer hold out against the bribes, the snares, and gilded chains prepared for it. The romantic Tyro was right and free, the callous Courtier was a slave and self-conceited. All this was true; it was honest, downright, and well put. There was no cant in it, as far as regards the unequal odds and the hard battle that reason has to fight with pleasure, or ambition, or interest, or other antagonist motives. But does the objection apply to morality solely, or has not religion its share in it? Man is not what he ought to be—Granted; but is he not different from this ideal standard, in spite of religion as well as of morality? Is not the religious man often a slave to power, the victim of pleasure, the thrall of avarice, hard of heart, a sensual hypocrite, cunning, mercenary, miserable? If it be said that the really religious man is none of these, neither is the truly moral man. Real morality, as well as vital Christianity, implies right conduct and consistent principle. But the question simply at issue is, whether the profession or the belief of sound moral opinions implies these; and it certainly does it no more than the profession or belief of orthodox religious opinions does. The conviction of the good or ill consequences of our actions in this life does not absolutely conform the will or the desires to good; neither does the apprehension of future rewards or punishments produce this effect completely or necessarily. The candidate for heaven is a backslider; the dread of eternal torments makes but a temporary impression on the mind. This is not a reason, in our judgment, for neglecting or giving up in despair the motives of religion or morality, but for strengthening and cultivating both. With Mr. Irving, it is a triumphant and unanswerable ground for discarding and denouncing morality, and for exalting religion, as the sovereign cure for all wounds, as the *thaumaturgos*, or wonder-worker, in the reform of mankind! We are at a loss to understand how this exclusive and somewhat intolerant view of the subject is reconcileable with sound reason or with history.

We cannot allow the following note in this article to pass, it is so preciously characteristic:—

Some years ago, a periodical paper was published in London, under the title of the *Pic-Nic*. It was got up under the auspices of a Mr. Fulke Greville, and several writers of that day contributed to it, among whom were Mr. Horace Smith, Mr. Dubois, Mr. Prince Hoare, Mr. Cumberland, and others. On some dispute arising between the proprietor and the gentlemen-contributors on the subject of an advance

in the remuneration for articles, Mr. Fulke Greville grew heroic, and said, "I have got a young fellow just come from Ireland, who will undertake to do the whole, verse and prose, politics and scandal, for two guineas a week; and if you will come and sup with me to-morrow night, you shall see him, and judge whether I am not right in closing with him." Accordingly, they met the next evening, and the **WRITER OF ALL WORK** was introduced. He began to make a display of his native ignorance and impudence on all subjects immediately, and no one else had occasion to say any thing. When he was gone, Mr. Cumberland exclaimed, "A talking potato, by God!" The talking potato was Mr. Croker of the Admiralty. Our adventurer shortly, however, returned to his own country, and passing accidentally through a town where they were in want of a ministerial candidate at an election, the gentleman of modest assurance offered himself, and succeeded. "They wanted a Jack-pudding," said the father of the hopeful youth, "and so they chose my son." The case of the Duke of York and Mrs. Clarke soon after came on, and Mr. Croker, who is a dabbler in dirt, and an adept in love-letters, rose from the affair Secretary to the Admiralty, and the very "rose and expectancy of the fair State."

We have not time to dwell upon a version or rather paraphrase of the Squire's Tale, from Chaucer, the author of which seems disposed to personify the spirit

Of him who left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold.

It appears to us to be executed with a fine feeling of the old genuine Chaucerian manner of story telling, in which the narrator seem embued with the simplicity of the ancient faith in the wonderful of his own tale. No sequel however is given in this number, nor is it *absolutely* promised; but we somehow guess that it will be forthcoming. Our space will not allow of adequate extracts.

A powerfully eloquent article, entitled "Arguing in a Circle," gives some pointed remarks on the character of Burke, and upon the consequences of an abandonment of early connexion and principles after reaching a mature period of life.

We have neither time nor space to allude to the miscellanea, which as usual closes the number,—a number that, for originality and variety, possesses considerable claims to general favour.

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*Ancient Spanish Ballads, Historical and Romantic, translated by  
J. G. Lockart, LL. B.*

Mr. Lockart, it seems, smatters a little in rhyme as well as reason. We can have no objection to this, provided his friends have none:—it will enable us to decide, much more fairly than any anonymous publications can do, upon his positive claims on the public attention. Before we open the "Ancient Spanish Ballads," however, it may be as well to premise, that we shall say little or nothing upon them *as translations*, that question having been already discussed in the last number of the "London Magazine," by a gentleman well qualified to speak on the subject. He says that *all Mr. Lockart's opinions* on Spanish literature *are incorrect*; that his *translations* are *not* like the originals; and that his reasoning upon the language shows him to be utterly unacquainted with what he, very flippantly, presumes to decide upon. For ourselves, we have a few words to say also; but as Mr. L. has been condemned already as a translator, we will give him another chance, and try him only as an English poet.\*

\* It may be as well to say, that we have turned over most of the leaves of "Dep-ping's Collection," from which Lockart says that he has taken the ballads; but we really are unable to pitch upon the particular ballads which he affects to have *translated*, once or twice we thought that we had hit upon the right one, but we



"J. G. Lockart, LL. B." has hitherto enjoyed a considerable anonymous reputation. He has put his name to nothing, indeed, but to these ballads; yet his tory friends at Edinburgh and elsewhere have been busy enough puffing off the small matters that are attributed to him. He is said to have written the ——— article; to have had a hand in ———; and actually to have written the *preface* to ———. Now this is all very poor proceeding, as it seems to us. If Mr. Lockart has scribbled any thing that is worth attention, why does he not put his name to it? Is he ashamed of his books? or has he abused all or any part of the literary public? Is he afraid of being measured by the side of writers whom he has contemned? or does he (like his friend of the north) hope to *mystify* himself into popularity? We can scarcely help laughing at this last question, seeing how hopeless would be such a notion on the part of so small a person as our author.

Mr. Lockart, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Galt, we believe, undertake, one and all, to set at rest the questionable merits of our different aspirants to poetic renown. Now we think that this excellent triumvirate should, as a preliminary, show their qualifications for doing this. We do not mean to insist that critics on poetry should always be poets; but we mean to say that they should not be mere scribblers of doggerel rhyme or vulgar dialogue, nor weak and washy imitators of cotemporary poets. If they *are* these and nothing more, they can have no pretensions, we think, to speak upon this delicate subject. Of these three persons, all of whom have attempted verse, we shall have something, perhaps, to say in future numbers. At present, it is sufficient to observe, that we like Mr. Wilson's pastoral whistle, on the whole, better than the jew's-harp of Mr. Lockart, or the gabble of Galt.

To return to Mr. L. and his ballads—we observe that several of them were first published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, at a time when Mr. L. was pretty universally believed to have been co-editor of that precious work. The first specimen which the author gave was ingenious enough: it contained the only tolerable ballads in the collection. A few months afterwards, however, he sent others,—not quite so good; and to these a preface was written (*by whom?*) saying, among other things, "*We have no doubt [but that] our readers will thank us for inserting the following, &c.*" and "*to say nothing of the merits of the translations themselves,*" &c. with other matter equally important. Then came the ballads themselves; and in order that we may not be accused of treating this Scotch writer unfairly, we will look at one or two of these very ballads, which the author has selected out of the mass. They seem to us remarkable for nothing but an extreme prosiness, a continual repetition of the same word or idea (to fill the line) and for those common-place inversions of language which must be classed among the very poorest artifices of our inferior rhymers.

Our first is called "Song for the Morning of the Day of Saint John the Baptist," in the preface to which Mr. L. says that there "are many" on this subject; but he forbears to tell us, on this as well as on almost all other occasions, *which is the particular ballad* that he professes to render into English. The song begins as follows:—

were speedily convinced that we must have been mistaken. Surely "*The Bridal of Andalla*" can never be intended as a translation of "*Pon te a las rejas azules,*" (Depp. p. 371.)

- v. 1. "Come forth, come forth, my maidens, 'tis the day of good Saint John,  
It is the Baptist's morning that breaks the hills upon.
- v. 2. Come forth, come forth, my maidens, the woodlands all are green,  
And the little birds are singing the opening leaves between.
- v. 3. Come forth, come forth, my maidens, and slumber not away,  
The blessed blessed morning of John the Baptist's day.
- v. 4. Come forth, come forth, my maidens, the air is calm and cool,  
And the violet blue far down (q. where?) ye'll view reflected in the pool,  
The violets and the" &c.

Now, we have here given half, or two out of four lines from the first four stanzas of this song; and it contains only six. Is it extravagant to say that any school boy, who has topped his tenth year, could go on rhyming in this small fashion for a week?—we think not.

The next ballad which we shall take will be one which Mr. Lockart also selected to ornament his brother Blackwood's pages. It stands p. 113, in the published book, is called "The Death of Don Alonzo of Aquilar," and begins with something about "Fernando king of Arragon," and "dukes and barons many a one," and "champions of emprise," and such phrases, which the industrious manufacturer of verse may very easily acquire, provided he has some of the old (or new) ballads, and a pair of scissors in his possession. But take a stave:

"Then spake Fernando, Hear grandees, which of ye all will go  
And give my banner in the breeze of Alpuxar to flow,  
Those heights along, the moors are strong, now, who by dawn of day  
Will plant the cross their cliffs among, and drive the dogs away?"

This is really very tiresome—but, allons!—"Up starts," according to usage, one of Mr. Lockart's "champions of emprise," called Alonzo, who offers to go against the Moors; whereat—

"Much joyed the king these words to hear—he bids Alonzo speed,  
And long before the revel's o'er the knight is on his steed,  
Alonzo's on his milk-white steed, with horsemen and his train—  
A thousand horse, a chosen band, ere dawn the hills to gain."

The reader will not fail to observe here the cheapest possible method of making prose into verse. We would rather have one stanza with the bloom of inspiration upon it, than all this withered, grotesque, and tasteless imitation-fruit. But let us go on a little further in the same ballad—

"Then nought avails the eagle-eye, the guardian of Castile,  
The eye of wisdom," &c.  
"And there upon the village green they laid him out to view,  
Upon the village green he lay," &c.

To which place a Christian dame, it seems, came,—or, in Mr. Lockart's words, "across the woods came she"—(Can he do nothing strait-forward?)—

"To look upon the Christian corpse, and wash it decently.  
She looked upon him," &c.

But we must really stop, for the sake of our readers. This ballad-mongering is surely sad trash, unless it be very different from that which we have been wading through.

The time is gone by, we apprehend, when "young gentlemen," even of Scotland, could add a cubit to their statures or a tittle to their names, by copying the metre of our old ballad-writers. Some of those writers were assuredly good (though the greater part were indifferent enough): they had naiveté, pathos, &c. and sometimes a strain of wild sad music ran through their compositions which was delightful. Had Mr. Lockart written ballads a few centuries ago, he must unquestion-



ably have taken his rank among the *οἱ πολλοί*, and been duly forgotten; and, unless there be some better reason than we are at present aware of, he must perforce take his station there even now. When we speak of the *ancient* ballads, we do not mean to insist that Mr. L. has actually composed laborious imitations of those artless poems. On the contrary, he seems to have studied them in the mirror of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott; and—like a Lazarus at the table of Dives—to have picked up some of the crumbs of verse which have been flung from the table of his wealthier friend. Mr. L. is the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, and may perhaps entertain a superstition that the mantle of the Baronet must necessarily descend upon himself. If so, we must beg him to dismiss so wild a notion. In the first place, he is not in the strict line of inheritance—and, what is much more to the purpose, he has prodigiously small personal pretensions to *any* laurel, even of Scottish growth. He appears to know little or nothing of poetical diction; to have a bad ear and a meagre fancy; and he is certainly utterly without imagination. We say this, not in the spirit of hostility to Mr. Lockart—but in mournful sincerity; for we are vexed to see the Spanish Ballads, which afford such ample materials, wasted and done into measured prose by such a trifler.

To conclude—We have not strained our bow at Mr. Lockart, because we would not be thought to act unfairly, and also, to say the truth, because his importance does not require it. We leave therefore his many untold sins to the certain oblivion which awaits them. With respect to the better part of Mr. Lockart's book—there is an agreeable feeling in "The Bridal of Andalla;" there is something pretty in "the Ear-rings;" and something which approximates to spirit in "The Bull-Fight"—but it is the spirit of *prose*, and not of poetry; and, generally speaking, whatever is good in the *translations* (since they are to be called so) may, we believe, be found in the *Spanish* language.—We understand that Mr. Lockart is a lawyer: we will therefore, at parting, give him one piece of counsel. Let him give up poetry. He has, he may be assured, *no* qualifications whatever for the art. He has none of the faults of a young writer, and none of the excellencies of an experienced one; and we cannot, in our sincerity, give him the least hopes of success. He had much better stick to the law. We may, in that case, be tempted to give him a brief some day or other. We should like to see how well he could maintain the cause of *the Plaintiff* in a case of low and impudent libel.

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#### KING RICHARD I., A TROUBADOUR.

WE have some repugnance to believe that a tyrant like Richard could be a poet, because it seems an anomaly in nature to unite the most delicate sense of beauty, with a rugged regardlessness of the sufferings of others. Yet in this man they were united. But we must consider Richard as the poet of circumstance, as the offspring of secondary inspiration, rather than as one who, in any situation, and under any conjuncture, would have possessed the elements of verse. Being made Count of Poitou in 1174, he passed some time in Provence, amid the inspiration of its bards and minstrels. His mind was vigorous, and susceptible of the romance of the period; he became the protector of the Troubadours, and cultivated with success their somewhat licen-

tious muse. But his fierce genius was incapable of handling the erotic lyre; for it appears, from what remains of his verses, that anger and a rooted thirst of vengeance made him employ his pen in the composition of *Sirvantes*, or satires against his enemies; and when he does seem desirous of turning aside to fondle for a moment with the little loves, who skip on each side of his path, it is with an awkwardness of gait and heavy sportiveness, which make him look like Polypheme at play with a butterfly.

The *Sirvante* which he wrote in his German prison, as might be expected, is the most interesting; as it represents him pensive and complaining, and communicating his thoughts to his brother Troubadours, as to equals and friends. In the first stanza he endeavours to prove, that a captive may bemoan his fate without effeminacy, and give vent to his spleen with justice—"for no one," says he, "speaks well of the place of his captivity." He then goes on to reproach his barons for suffering him to wear away the heavy days in confinement; lashes his enemies in a very heroic and kingly strain; and concludes with a compliment to his mistress. There remains another piece of his against the Dauphin of Auvergne, and the Count Guy his cousin. It is curious as a picture of the manners of the times: but the poetry, we must own, is rather monarchical; that is to say, bad. However, Richard does not lose ground in our minds by being viewed as a Troubadour; for the *gai saber*, (gay science) as poetry was then styled, tends to mellow a little the acidity of his heroism, and to show him something better than a mere myrmidon, moving about with javelin and twisted mail.

Whatever we may think of the poetry of the Troubadours in other respects, there was in it a gracefulness, a fine sequence and connexion of ideas observable throughout, which we might in vain seek to equal in the production of a much later period. It is generally believed, with reason, that when the elements of society are gathering together into one place, and freeing themselves from the entangling recollections of the savage state, that then also the nobler creations of poetry spring up; for the mind, in so curious a position, must be drenched by the overflow of new associations, and continually looking forth with a credulous enthusiasm, for the wonderful and the grand. But it would seem likewise, that continuity of feeling and sustained energy would be wanting, from the known fickleness of half-cultivated minds; yet this is not the case with even the earlier Troubadours. Their feelings, such as they were, were supported and carried on with wonderful art; and one of the most singular events of time is the sudden extinction of this highly-gifted race. For it might have been expected that so wide and powerful a stream would have flowed on over fen and waste, increasing and widening as it went; and though we see the event, there do not appear any predisposing causes at all adequate to the effect. One thing may have considerably assisted:—the art was principally in the hands of princes and great lords, who naturally relinquished it for the more exquisite gratifications of luxury and power. Hence its disrepute—hence, possibly, its fall.

But we cannot help pursuing Richard one step farther—to the throne; and imagining what he might have been, could poetry have shared the tyranny with his passions. His whole life was nothing else than a quick succession of romantic scenes: the play of the passions; the rapid movements of war; the splendour of new situations, never held



long enough to be soiled by familiarity; the whole chain of every diversity of character unrolling itself before him; and, added to this, the sight of places enriched with all the beauties of nature, and all the enthusiasm of superstitious associations. Who could have written *Sirvantes* after passing through changes such as these? Is the imagination a dumb attribute, without knowledge? Is it a cloud driven about by the wind till the warmth of knowledge convert it into a fertilizing rain? It would seem that uncultivated minds have much fancy, which is a primary quality, but in reality very little imagination; though the latter be constantly mistaken for the former. Imagination is mature fancy, collected into form and power by the operation of knowledge. This is the portion of only the first order of minds, borne upwards by the number and force of their ideas, and grasping a proportion of the universe too extensive for the eye of fancy. 'Tis for this reason that ages of ignorance never produced a great poem. Poetry stands upon the isthmus which separates barbarism from effeminate civilization: her nerves are braced by the rough breezes of the one, her face is brightened by the brilliancy reflected by the other. The Troubadours merely caught a far-off glimpse of her countenance, before their ship foundered, as mariners out at sea perceive morning growing upon some distant peak, as they are falling into the clutches of the hurricane.

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#### CHARACTERISTICS.

We have always regarded the Percy Anecdotes as a very pretty book, not over-abounding in novelty, certainly,—their Reverences Reuben and Sholto Percy seem to entertain a very marked regard for antiquity,—but then the graphic decoration is neat, and the *idea*, as the publisher might say, as original as the execution is otherwise. Moreover, it has inspired us with a notion that we may now and then entertain by a similar arrangement in reference to social portrait-painting; or in other words, to the illustration of those more striking outlines of character by which men are broadly distinguished from one another. In the pursuance of this plan, we shall proceed with very little ceremony, and, in the easy spirit of this miscellany, take up our subjects as they accidentally occur to us. It is indeed precisely in consequence of accident that we commence with APOSTACY as a text; and chuse to exhibit its characteristic features by an advertence to the lines, or rather, as was said of old Macklin, the *cordage* of the intellectual countenance of Sprat, Bishop of Rochester—a prelatiical worthy who bears an amazing resemblance to a tribe of animals who are at this time exceedingly brisk in a neighbouring nation, and not altogether quiescent in our own.

“What is there in a change of opinion,” says a certain writer, “beyond an admission that we are wiser to-day than we were yesterday?” This is plausible, and smacks of *impudent* candour; but as far as it is a genuine, and not a mere constitutional change of mind, will it prompt to moderation and a tolerance of opposing opinion in other people? and when thus exhibited, the phrase Apostate is undoubtedly inapplicable. It is obvious, however, to all who attend the career of the unequivocal apostate, that he is the most rancorous and intolerant of all men—at once the most furious and the most servile, and worse and worse in every succeeding transmutation, as witness the aforesaid Dr. Sprat.

Sprat began authorship precisely as the writer of Wat Tyler or M. Chateaubriand might have done—with a flaming eulogy on Oliver Cromwell, for which he apologizes to that extraordinary man, as unequal to the renown “of the *Prince*” on whom it was written, “such great actions and lives deserving to be the subject of the noblest pens and most divine phansies.” After the Restoration, the hopeful poet took orders, and became chaplain to that “most puissant” and pious personage, the second George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. Under such godly patronage and influence, it was impossible not to rise; and at the expiration of some years the panegyrist of Cromwell became Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster. In the latter capacity—how inseparable is apostacy and rancour—he refused to admit of a line in an epitaph on Phillips, because he was praised as second only to Milton, and the name of Milton must not disgrace the abbey walls! This glorious fact is mentioned by Dr. Johnson with seeming approbation, nor can he even find in his heart to censure the most flaming, nay profane adulation, from the same exalted purity and disinterestedness, of the manifold virtues of that quintessence of royal profligacy, King Charles II. “In consequence of his preferment,” says the Doctor in the sincerity of his Toryism, “the court having a *claim* upon his *diligence*, he was required to write the history of the Rye-house Plot, which he did with such an utter neglect of honour and veracity—[bravo, Bishop!]  
—that in the succeeding reign he found it *convenient* to extenuate and excuse it.” This was precisely the man for that miserable and stupid designer, James II.; so that the protégé of Buckingham, the lauder of Cromwell, the abhorrer of Milton, and the eulogist of Charles II. became a member of the famous, or rather infamous, ecclesiastical commission, which office he held until the storm whistled about his ears, when he found it *convenient* a second time to beg pardon of the nation, that is to say, *after* the Revolution. Lastly, he was one of those who did not think the crown vacated by James, and yet he *complied* with the then order of things, and died Bishop of Rochester.

Such was the man who was inspired with a transport of indignation at the name of Milton, and such has ever been Apostacy. Change in these men is not conviction, but temper; not folly, but baseness. To atone for foolish writing on the side they abandon, nothing more is necessary, in their opinion, than to write warmly and abusively in favour of that which they espouse. It would be absurd to say that men never change their opinions from sound causes; but we certainly utterly distrust those who do so vehemently and rapidly. Principles are never thus speedily obliterated, but are worn away, as the rock is hollowed out by the ceaseless waves of the ocean. Even when satisfied of the superiority of the new opinions to the old, when thus hastily adopted with power or emolument in sight—a not unfrequent Parliamentary spectacle—we are involuntarily tempted, in allusion to the very despicable subject of this article, to exclaim—a Sprat—a Sprat!

Q.

[To be continued occasionally.]